Puberty



Introduction

Puberty is a time when we all experience a lot of different things in our body. Finding support and information about how your body may change will help you understand what is natural and where you might need extra support.

What is puberty?

Puberty is a time when your body begins to develop as you move from childhood to adulthood. It can be a challenging time because there are lots of changes happening very quickly.

Because some puberty changes happen in areas that we see as private and intimate it can often be hard to talk about openly.

> *The changes that happen during puberty are completely normal. You don't need to be embarrassed talking about these changes, you can speak to a health*

professional and youth support services who are knowledgeable about puberty and talk about it all the time.

The physical changes of puberty can start anytime between 8 and 13 for females, and 9 and 14 for males. Everybody is different, some people start puberty a few years earlier than their friends, and others start later.

These changes usually take between 2 and 5 years to be fully complete. If you have noticed some different things happening in your body and you are worried or curious about them, talk to someone, because support is available.

If you don't want to talk to your parents or guardians, then visiting a doctor is a good place to start. A doctor can tell you a lot of information about these changes and help you feel comfortable – because it's all normal!

Why are these changes happening to me?

During puberty certain hormones, especially from the ovaries and testicles increase in amount. The hormones travel around the bloodstream and signal different body parts to develop in different ways.

Hormones are responsible for the different changes that happen throughout puberty. **Body Talk** has more information on puberty and hormones.

Some of the changes that happen during puberty might be:

- Growing taller.
- An increase in body odour.
- Growing hair in different areas, like your armpits, pubic area, and face.
- Noticing changes in your genitals.
- Menstrual periods can start in puberty which can sometimes be painful or

irregular.

- Developing acne.

- Body shape changes. This can include the development of ‘secondary sexual characteristics’, like hips or shoulders getting wider. (Some people can struggle with body image as a result.)

- Gaining weight or muscles.

- Changes in your voice.

Why do I feel like eating more/less during puberty?

During puberty you might also notice that eating habits change, like eating more food than you used to. You might be feeling hungrier because of the changes happening in your body. It is important to eat enough healthy foods to help your body develop during this time.

Protein, vitamins and minerals are especially important nutrients for healthy muscle and bone development. You can find information on how to eat well for your body during puberty on the Nutrition Australia and the Dieticians Association of Australia websites.

You can also find out more by speaking to a doctor (GP) or youth health service. You can find your local youth health clinics on the Health Direct Service Finder by selecting ‘Youth Services’ (you’ll find it under ‘Other Services’).

Health Direct Service Finder can help you find youth friendly doctors near you by selecting ‘Youth Services’ (you’ll find it under ‘Other Services’).

Puberty support services and resources

Where can I find support and information on puberty?

There are many places where you can find support and information on all things puberty:

- Body Talk has an interactive website that shows you before and after changes in that happen with your body during puberty.
- Nurse Nettie is a real-life nurse answering your questions on this website and you can ask anything you would like.
- Reach Out has information on body image, emotional changes, exercise and eating well.
- Play Safe has information on your sexual body parts developing, periods and masturbation.
- Family Planning Australia has a great booklet on puberty.
- headspace has information on everyday life topics for teenagers.
- Kids Helpline has information on puberty changes, becoming a teen, and body image.

You can also check out the Ask for Health Resources and Services section